We claim:

1. A system for performing chest compressions on a patient, said system comprising:

a housing;

a drive spool operably attached to the housing;

a means for rotating the drive spool, said means for rotating disposed within the housing and operably attached to the drive spool;

a compression belt comprising:

a belt suitable for compressing the chest of the patient; and

a liner sock loosely fitted over the belt and attached to the belt;

wherein the belt may be attached to the drive spool.

2. The system of claim 1 further comprising a compression pad attached to the belt and disposed within the liner sock.

3. A system for performing chest compressions on a patient, said system comprising:

a housing;

a drive spool operably attached to the housing;

a means for rotating the drive spool, said means for rotating disposed within the housing and operably attached to the drive spool;

a compression belt cartridge comprising:

a belt suitable for compressing the chest of the patient; and

a breakable link attached to the belt, said breakable link sized and dimensioned to break when a particular amount of force is applied to the link, and wherein the breakable link is attached to the belt such that if the breakable link breaks, the belt will separate;

wherein the belt may be attached to the drive spool.

4. The system of claim 3 further comprising a compression pad attached to the belt.

5. A system for performing chest compressions on a patient, said system comprising:

a housing;

a drive spool operably attached to the housing;

a means for rotating the drive spool, said means for rotating disposed within the housing and operably attached to the drive spool;

a first spindle rotatably attached to the housing;

a second spindle rotatably attached to the housing;

a compression belt cartridge comprising:

a belt suitable for compressing the chest of the patient;

a first belt guard operably attached to the belt such that the belt may slide through the first belt guard; and

a second belt guard operably attached to the belt such that the belt may slide through the second belt guard;

wherein the belt is removably attachable to the drive spool, the first belt guard is removably attachable to the first spindle and the second belt guard is removably attachable to the second spindle.

6. The system of claim 5 further comprising a compression pad attached to the belt.

7. The system of claim 5 wherein:

the compression belt cartridge further comprises a cover plate removably attached to the housing; and

the first belt guard is operably attached to the cover plate and the second belt guard is operably attached to the cover plate opposite the first belt guard.

8. The system of claim 7 further comprising:

a first hinge rotatably connecting the first belt guard to the cover plate;

a second hinge rotatably connecting the second belt guard to the cover plate;

9. The system of claim 8 further comprising:

a first ratchet attached to the first belt guard and a first pawl attached to the cover plate, said first pawl operatively engaging the first ratchet; and

a second ratchet attached to the second belt guard and a second pawl attached to the cover plate, said second pawl operatively engaging the second ratchet.

10. A system for performing chest compressions on a patient, said system comprising:

a housing;

a drive spool operably attached to the housing;

a means for rotating the drive spool, said means for rotating disposed within the housing and operably attached to the drive spool;

a first spindle rotatably attached to the housing;

a second spindle rotatably attached to the housing;

a compression belt cartridge comprising:

a belt suitable for compressing the chest of the patient, said belt having a first portion and a second portion;

a cover plate removably attachable to the housing;

a first belt guard operably attached to the cover plate, said first belt guard operably attached to the belt such that the belt may slide through the first belt guard;

a second belt guard operably attached to the cover plate opposite the first belt guard, said second belt guard operably attached to the belt such that the belt may slide through the second belt guard;

a first liner sock loosely fitted over the first portion of the belt, said first liner sock attached to the first portion of the belt and attached to the first belt guard;

a second liner sock loosely fitted over the second portion of the belt, said second liner sock attached to the second portion of the belt and attached to the second belt guard;

a compression pad attached to the first portion of the belt and disposed within the first liner sock; and

a breakable link attached to the belt, said breakable link sized and dimensioned to break when a particular amount of force is applied to the link, and wherein the breakable link is attached to the belt such that if the breakable link breaks, the belt will separate;

wherein the belt is removably attachable to the drive spool, the first belt guard is removably attachable to the first spindle and the second belt guard is removably attachable to the second spindle.

11. The system of claim 10 further comprising:

a first hinge rotatably connecting the first belt guard to the cover plate; and a second hinge rotatably connecting the second belt guard to the cover plate.

12. The system of claim 10 further comprising:

a first ratchet attached to the first belt guard and a first pawl attached to the cover plate, said first pawl operatively engaging the first ratchet; and

a second ratchet attached to the second belt guard and a second pawl attached to the cover plate, said second pawl operatively engaging the second ratchet.

13. The system of claim 10 wherein the breakable link is disposed inside the first liner sock.

14. The system of claim 10 wherein the breakable link is disposed inside a sleeve attached to the belt.

15. The system of claim 14 wherein the breakable link is disposed inside a sleeve, said sleeve attached to the belt and disposed inside the first liner sock.

16. The system of claim 10 wherein the first belt guard is provided with a first belt slot and the second belt guard is provided with a second belt slot, wherein the belt is threaded through the first belt slot and through the second belt slot.

17. A method of performing chest compressions on a patient, said method comprising the steps of:

providing system for performing chest compressions, said system comprising:

a housing;

a drive spool operably attached to the housing;

a means for rotating the drive spool, said means for rotating disposed within the housing and operably attached to the drive spool;

a compression belt cartridge comprising:

a belt suitable for compressing the chest of the patient, said belt having a first portion and a second portion;

a first liner sock disposed around the first portion of the belt, said first liner sock attached to the first portion of the belt;

a second liner sock disposed around the second portion of the belt, said second liner sock attached to the second portion of the belt;

a compression pad attached to the first portion of the belt and disposed within the first liner sock; and

a breakable link attached to the belt, said breakable link sized and dimensioned to break when a particular amount of force is applied to the link, and wherein the breakable link is attached to the belt such that if the breakable link breaks, the belt will separate;

wherein the belt is removably attachable to the drive spool;

placing the patient on the housing;

wrapping the first and second portions of the belt at least partially around the chest of the patient such that the belt is capable of compressing the chest of the patient; and

rotating the drive spool to tighten the belt to compress the chest.

18. The method of claim 17 comprising the further steps of:

detaching the cover plate from the housing and removing the belt from the drive spool;

providing a second compression belt cartridge comprising:

a second belt suitable for compressing the chest of the patient, said second belt having a third portion and a fourth portion;

a third liner sock disposed around the third portion of the second belt, said third liner sock attached to the third portion of the second belt;

a fourth liner sock disposed around the fourth portion of the second belt, said fourth liner sock attached to the fourth portion of the second belt;

a second compression pad attached to the third portion of the second belt and disposed within the third liner sock; and

a second breakable link attached to the second belt, said second breakable link sized and dimensioned to break when a particular amount of force is applied to the second link, and wherein the second breakable link is attached to the second belt such that if the second breakable link breaks, the second belt will separate;

attaching the second belt to the drive spool;

wrapping the third and fourth portions of the second belt at least partially around the chest of the patient such that the second belt is capable of compressing the chest of the patient; and

rotating the drive spool to tighten the second belt to compress the chest of the patient.

19. A method of performing chest compressions on a patient, said method comprising the steps of:

providing system for performing chest compressions, said system comprising:

a housing;

a drive spool operably attached to the housing;

a means for rotating the drive spool, said means for rotating disposed within the housing and operably attached to the drive spool;

a first spindle rotatably attached to the housing;

a second spindle rotatably attached to the housing;

a compression belt cartridge comprising:

a belt suitable for compressing the chest of the patient, said belt having a first portion and a second portion;

a cover plate removably attachable to the housing;

a first belt guard operably attached to the cover plate, said first belt guard operably attached to the belt such that the belt may slide through the first belt guard;

a second belt guard operably attached to the cover plate, said second belt guard operably attached to the belt such that the belt may slide through the second belt guard;

a first liner sock disposed around the first portion of the belt, said first liner sock attached to the first portion of the belt and attached to the first belt guard;

a second liner sock disposed around the second portion of the belt, said second liner sock attached to the second portion of the belt and attached to the second belt guard;

a compression pad attached to the first portion of the belt and disposed within the first liner sock; and

a breakable link attached to the belt, said breakable link sized and dimensioned to break when a particular amount of force is applied to the link, and wherein the breakable link is attached to the belt such that if the breakable link breaks, the belt will separate;

wherein the belt is removably attachable to the drive spool, the first belt guard is removably attachable to the first spindle and the second belt guard is removably attachable to the second spindle;

placing the patient on the housing;

wrapping the first and second portions of the belt at least partially around the chest of the patient such that the belt is capable of compressing the chest of the patient; and

rotating the drive spool to tighten the belt to compress the chest.

20. The method of claim 19 comprising the further steps of:

removing the first patient from the housing;

detaching the cover plate from the housing and removing the belt from the drive spool;

providing a second compression belt cartridge comprising:

a second belt suitable for compressing the chest of the patient, said second belt having a third portion and a fourth portion;

a second cover plate;

a third belt guard operably attached to the second cover plate, said third belt guard operably attached to the second belt such that the second belt may slide through the third belt guard;

a fourth belt guard operably attached to the second cover plate, said fourth belt guard operably attached to the second belt such that the second belt may slide through the fourth belt guard;

a third liner sock disposed around the third portion of the second belt, said third liner sock attached to the third portion of the second belt and attached to the third belt guard;

a fourth liner sock disposed around the fourth portion of the second belt, said fourth liner sock attached to the fourth portion of the second belt and attached to the fourth belt guard;

a second compression pad attached to the third portion of the second belt and disposed within the third liner sock; and

a second breakable link attached to the second belt, said second breakable link sized and dimensioned to break when a particular amount of force is applied to the second link, and wherein the second breakable link is attached to the second belt such that if the second breakable link breaks, the second belt will separate;

attaching the second belt to the drive spool;

attaching the second cover plate to the housing;

attaching the third belt guard to the first spindle and the fourth belt guard to the second spindle;

placing a second patient on the housing;

wrapping the third and fourth portions of the second belt at least partially around the chest of the second patient such that the second belt is capable of compressing the chest of the second patient; and

rotating the drive spool to tighten the second belt to compress the chest of the second patient.